

*to Evangelical Religion.*

It will require a very affecting impression of the Christian truth, a decided conception of the Christian character, and a habit of thinking with sympathetic admiration of the most elevated class of Christians, to preserve the genuine evangelical spirit amidst this ideal society with personages who might pardonably have been esteemed of the noblest form of human nature, if a revelation had not been received from heaven. ^ Some views of this excellence it were in vain for a Christian to forbid himself to admire ; but he must learn to admire under a discriminative restriction, else the emotion involves a desertion of his cause. He must learn to assign these men in thought to another sphere, and to regard them as beings under a different economy with which our relations are dissolved ; as wonderful examples of a certain imperfect kind of moral greatness, formed on a model foreign to true religion, and which is crumbled to dust and given to the winds. — At the same time, he may well, while beholding some of these men, deplore that if so much excellence could be formed on such a model, the sacred system which gives the acknowledged exemplar for his own character should not have far more assimilated him to heaven. — So much for the effect of the most interesting part of ancient literature.

In the next letter I shall make some observations on modern polite literature, in application of the same rule of judgment. Many of them must unavoidably be very analogous to those already made ; since the greatest number of the modern fine writers acquired much of the character of their minds from those of the ancient world. Probably indeed the ancients have exerted a much more extensive influence in modern times by means of the modern writers to whom they have communicated their moral spirit, than immediately by their own works.

LETTER VII.

To a man who had long observed the influences which tyrannize over human passions and opinions, it would not perhaps have appeared strange, that when the Grand Renovator came on earth, and during the succeeding ages, a number of the men, whose superior talents were to carry on the course of literature, and promote and guide the